

Proverbs 23-12-20a

Good evening, welcome to the Wednesday night Bible class here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We're in Proverbs chapter 13, and we are going to be looking this evening at verses seven through 11. This is the second section in this chapter, and it has to do with wealth and words.

Uh, we're going to see a correction in the text tonight that is going to greatly help us understand what's going on here. It's been a head scratcher for me for a couple of weeks, and so I'm glad to have finally cracked it. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our study, on our time of fellowship, and we'll begin.

Father, it is a wonderful thing to remember that you are our strength and our Redeemer. We're grateful for this time of learning and seeking to find the wisdom and the light for our path that is contained in this portion of your Word. We ask your blessing on it as we investigate it together.

May the Holy Spirit find us ready pupils, apt to learn and ready to remember and make use of the principles that we see here tonight. We ask it in Jesus name. Amen.

Let's read just this section, Proverbs 13, seven through 11. There is one who makes himself rich yet has nothing, and one who makes himself poor yet has great riches. The ransom of a man's life is his riches, but the poor does not hear rebuke.

The light of the righteous rejoices, but the lamp of the wicked will be put out. By pride comes nothing but strife, but with the well-advised is wisdom. Wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished, but he who gathers by labor will increase.

This, to my eye, is one of the classic cases of a section of Proverbs that is viewed as something of a conglomerate. The mop was going across the floor and just picked up whatever it hit, and it's stuck there, and you're picking it off saying, where'd that come from? So, in fact, as with what we've seen in the previous section of Proverbs, this is a very well-constructed, tightly woven unit. It's all talking about the same thing, just turning it in at different perspectives.

Let's begin at verse seven. We began looking at this last time. There is one who makes himself rich, yet nothing.

One who makes himself poor, yet great riches. So, if we look at this as we saw last week, in terms not of material wealth, but of genuine riches, and this is in our context. We have righteousness and wickedness in verses five and six, and these are spiritual values.

So, we're not switching from the spiritual to the material here. This wealth is of a different sort. And so, how can you make yourself rich spiritually? We really can't.

These treasures come from the Lord. It is the Lord that gives wisdom. Out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding.

Remember Proverbs chapter two? You've got to receive the words and hide the commandments with you. You've got to incline your ear, lift up your voice, apply your heart. Then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and then you will find the knowledge of God.

But even then, we are not making ourselves rich in wisdom. We are pursuing that which only God can give, and God grants it. So, right away, we have a contrast here where the one who makes himself rich in material goods, as Jesus said, laying up for himself treasure on earth.

The man who said, look at all of my towers and barns. I will build more silos. I will increase my grain.

The fool, do you not know that this night your soul will be required of you? You look at the rich man who fared sumptuously in the Lazarus parable of Luke chapter 16. You look at the rich young ruler who came to the Lord Jesus and wasn't willing to part with his earthly goods to follow Christ. So, we can focus on accumulating and gathering and acquiring things in this life, or we can look for that which is of eternal value, that which we can take with us.

And that's what this is talking about. So, one who makes himself rich, yet on God's scale, he has nothing. No matter how rich you get, take the richest people on the planet, take the 10 richest men and pile all of their stuff together, compare that to God in heaven, who metaphorically, you know, the cattle on a thousand hills is of inestimable wealth even here on earth, but he's the creator God.

And no one here has anything that God has not either granted or allowed. And at the point of death, you leave it all behind. So, it is only a temporary stewardship of material goods.

So, if somebody dedicates himself to making himself rich, he can make himself rich, earthly wise, and yet have nothing. It is rare to the vanishing point to find a rich man who can enter the kingdom of heaven. Camel through the eye of a needle.

And yet there is one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches, counts himself poor. We quoted the verse so many times out of Revelation 3. You think that you've got all of this wonderful accumulation of advantages and wealth, and yet you are poor and miserable and blind and naked. Recognizing that we are poor as in the Beatitudes, the poor in spirit, regardless of how much accumulated possessions or status or position or authority or whatever else, poor in spirit, viewing ourselves as poor.

Jesus talking to the Pharisees. They asked him after he heals the blind man, are we blind

also? Jesus said, if you were blind, you would have no sin. If you would acknowledge your blindness, but because you say we see, your sin remains.

You count yourselves wealthy in terms of religious status and knowledge of the law. And that knowledge has puffed you up instead of the love that builds up. So this is the contrast and we get this from the context.

We started out with the fruit of the mouth, the words of wisdom, the son who is wise because of heeding his father's instruction that begins this section, begins this chapter. And so we are all in the realm of wisdom, wise words, wise counsel, or the foolishness of getting caught up in the cosmos, love not the world or the things that are in the world. So that is verse seven and verse eight has to be taken with verse seven.

These are a set and you can see this by comparing the outside lines and the inside lines. The ransom of a man's life is his riches, but the poor does not hear rebuke. You can draw a square around these two verses, or you can put brackets out by the side and link the first line in verse seven, one who makes himself rich to the second line in verse eight.

He has made himself rich and yet he in truth is poor because he doesn't have the spiritual wealth. He doesn't have the wisdom that makes you wealthy indeed. And because of that, it says he does not hear rebuke.

We're going to fix this. There's a single letter that has gotten changed in the Hebrew text that really clarifies what's going on. It doesn't, and this is a traction up to verse one, does not hear rebuke.

And those last four words are identical in the Masoretic text, but it is commonly understood that an R here should be an L and Resh and Lamed in handwritten texts are very easily confused. If you take a Resh and just put a neck on it, it becomes a Lamed. The R becomes an L very easily in Hebrew and vice versa.

If you miss the little neck, if it gets rubbed off, you think it's an R instead of an L. So we're going to correct the translation here in verse eight, correct the text actually. And this is a mistake in Masoretic text, but it's widely understood to be a mistake. And instead of rebuke, the word here is not Gerah, which is rebuke, but Gilah.

You see the difference? G-R-H or G-L-H. And Gilah is a fascinating word. It is well understood even in the modern day by Jewish people because it is the word for redemption, Gilah.

So you can go to the oldest Jewish newspaper published since 1844, the Jewish Chronicle, and they have an article on Gilah. It's very short. Gilah means redemption or deliverance.

This is what we celebrate on Passover. Literally, Geal, the word it comes from, means to

cover or protect. It's in Job chapter three, verse four.

A noun derived from this, galut. Have you ever heard somebody call someone a galut? You crazy galut? Well, galut in Hebrew means an exile. And it comes from the root that means to uncover.

So you have cover and uncover. And you remember the words for forgiveness in both Hebrew and Greek have the idea of covering over something, to cover over. And so Gilah refers also, and is used extensively in the Old Testament to refer to the redemption of property that was once yours, and you lose it.

And on the year of Jubilee, property returns to its former owner. It goes back to the tribe, goes back to the clan, goes back to the individual that had to lease it or sell it or lose it in some way. And this word, Gilah, the redemption of property is used for that.

So what does it mean in our context? There is, by the way, just to complete that thought about how Jews understand it today. There's another article in the Israelbible.com on this same word. What does redemption mean? Gilah, Hebrew for redemption, is often used in Jewish liturgy to refer to the future messianic age.

You know, we talk about, we read Paul and he says, we look forward to the resurrection, the redemption of our bodies. Well, the Jews look forward to the messianic age as redemption, as getting back their golden age and their land and their king and their hegemony, their independence, their freedom from oppression. And so Gilah is used even by modern Jews today to refer to that.

So with that in mind, understanding what Gilah has meant biblically and what it means even today in Hebrew, look back now at verse seven and verse eight. And when you get to the ransom of a man's life is his riches, this is a different word in Hebrew, but we've seen what it means. The redemption or the ransom here is the kaphar, which means to cover.

And Yom Kippur is a sort of a modern translation of kaphar, Kippur, Yom Kippur, the day of covering, the day of atonement, covering sins over. And so kopher, the covering, if you will, of a man's life is his riches. And then you have this line, the second line, the poor does not hear rebuke in our Bible, but the poor does not have Gilah, does not possess or have access to, or have any way of obtaining redemption.

And again, this is kind of cryptic unless you take it with verse seven, the one who makes himself rich earthly treasure yet has nothing. That line corresponds with the poor who has no redemption. He does not have the wherewithal to have his life redeemed, atoned for, bought, recovered.

He is poor in everything that redeems life, that makes life worthwhile. His life is empty. He has nothing because he's concentrated on earthly goods.

There is no redemption. What's going to happen to him in the resurrection? Think about Luke 16, Lazarus versus the rich man. Lazarus is in Abraham's bosom.

The rich man is in torments. He's got nothing. No redemption in the life to come because no focus on that which really counts, the true riches.

Look at the inside bracket here. The one who makes himself poor, treats himself as poor, regardless of how much God places under his care, he views himself as poor. If you view yourself as poor, this is like step one in the book for AA, steps of recovery for addiction is acknowledging I have a problem and I do not have the wherewithal to fix it.

I have to look outside myself. I have to look for help from the outside. I need God's help.

I need the help of others who have traveled this road. And that requires humility. We have to acknowledge that there is a problem.

Otherwise, you can't fix a problem you refuse to admit. So the one who makes himself poor yet has great riches. My son, if you will receive my words, the wise son who heeds his father's instruction says, I don't know what I ought to know.

I am young. I am the young man that's going to be taken in by the crafty harlot. I am Eve, who's going to be taken in by the serpent in the tree.

I need what only God can provide. And there are channels and avenues by which it comes. We heed the godly instruction of parents.

We heed godly instruction as it comes to us in church and as believers speak the truth to us in love. But we recognize that it comes from God through angels. Remember that the law was given to Israel by angels, by intermediaries.

Angel means messenger. And there are messengers. There are means.

Sometimes it can be books that we read. It can be any number of trustworthy sources who study and present the word of God properly. It can be elders in our periphery who have seen the outworking of this wisdom in their own lives and share it with us.

So we make ourselves poor. We stop worrying about what we will eat or what we will wear. Your heavenly father knows what you have need of before you ask him.

Take no thought. Trust that God will provide for material needs. We will have what we need when we need it for what we're going to do if we are emphasizing and focusing on the true riches.

So that interior set of lines, the one who makes himself poor yet has great riches, the ransom of that man's life is his riches. You see how it makes sense? The geula, the ransom, the redemption, the justification, the vindication, the life in the future, as well as

capacity for life, love, and happiness, both in this life and in the age to come, comes from these riches. You make yourself poor in the earthly sense.

You're not worried about stuff, but concentrating on these heavenly riches, these spiritual wealth, that's our ransom. See why these verses have to be taken together and understood correctly. It's really a tragedy that the hearing rebuke thing got put in there and it turned into an R instead of an L. Words matter.

And here, the one who is poor spiritually has no ransom. There is no way. It's like when our prayers are not heard because we have problems in the horizontal, our prayers will not be heard and so on.

So this is what is going on here. It's a very fascinating come to pass. And the Psalms give us insight into this.

What are these true riches? We say, okay, I get it. I'm supposed to have spiritual riches. What are these riches and how can we get them? It is easy to be caught up in the material because we live in a world that is defined by the need for food, clothing, shelter, utilities, appliances, transportation.

And without those, we can very quickly find ourselves facing circumstantial hardship, if not disaster. If you've got one car and you've got to commute 45 minutes to work and your car is broken, that's a real problem to not be able to show up at your job and so on. So we can let that kind of concern consume us and take up our available time and shift our priorities so that we say, well, let me get this stuff done and I'll do the spiritual as time permits, instead of remembering first and foremost that we are here by God's will, at God's behest to fulfill his plan and purpose.

And we have seen that in our most recent study, Timothy chapters one and two, what God's purpose is and what kind of life we should be living. So if we get distracted by the arguments and the opinions of the world on what is important and begin to lose sight of those spiritual riches, we're going to be in trouble. The Lord says in Matthew 13, 22, in connection with the parable of the sower and the seeds and the soil, parable of the soils, the person who hears the word, but worldly cares and the seductiveness of wealth.

Remember that the cares of the world and the seductiveness of wealth choke the word so that it produces nothing. Matthew 13, 22, you can put it in the margin right next to this set of verses. We have Matthew 6, 31 through 34.

This is the lilies of the field. This is a part of the sermon on the Mount. Don't worry saying, what will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear? The world pursues these things.

Your heavenly father knows that you need them above all. This is Matthew 6, 33, pursue his kingdom and righteousness. And all these things will be given to you as well.

So then do not worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow will worry about itself. Today has enough trouble of its own.

We have enough trouble sorting out our priorities, our goals, and our values today. And worries about what's going to happen to me if I don't have stuff is what the Lord is talking about there. James chapter one, I'm sorry, James chapter five, verse one through three, come now you rich.

James says, weep and cry aloud over the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your clothing has become moth eaten. What did the Lord say? Lay up not treasure on earth where moth and rust corrupt.

We saw what that rust actually is, where thieves break in and steal. Treasure in heaven. James says the same thing.

Your riches have rotted and your clothing has become moth eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted and their rust will be a witness against you. It will consume your flesh like fire.

It is in the last days. Is it in the last days that you have hoarded treasure? Have you had entirely the wrong priorities? That is what is going on here. Turn forward a few pages to Psalm 49.

Psalm 49, hear this all peoples, give ear all inhabitants of the world, both low and high, rich and poor together. My mouth shall speak wisdom. Isn't this what we're talking about? The verbal communication of wisdom.

What is poverty? What is wealth? Both rich and poor together. My mouth shall speak wisdom and the meditation of my heart understanding. I will incline my ear to a proverb.

I will disclose my dark saying on the harp. He's going to set this as lyrics to music. Why should I fear in the days of evil when iniquity at my heels surrounds me? Those who trust in their wealth and boast in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother.

Redeem, redemption. These are our words. None of them can redeem a brother nor give to God a ransom for him.

For the redemption of their souls is costly and it shall cease forever that he should continue to live eternally and not see the pit. He sees wise men die. Likewise, the fool and the senseless person perish and leave their wealth to others.

Their inner thought is that their houses will last forever. Their dwelling places to all generations. They call their lands after their own names.

Nevertheless, man, though in honor, does not remain. He is like the beasts that perish.

This is the way of those who are foolish and of their posterity who approve their sayings.

Stop and think. You're going to follow the advice of Warren Buffett or are you going to follow the advice of David and Solomon? Like sheep, they are laid in the grave. Death shall feed on them.

The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning. What is the morning? The resurrection. This is the geula to which the modern day.

Their beauty shall be consumed in the grave far from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave for he shall receive me. And what kind of reception, what kind of judgment, what kind of standing will we have in God's eyes? It isn't going to depend on our accomplishments, on our influence, on our social media posts, on our worldly wealth and attainments.

It will be the genuine wealth, the adornments that we've seen in first Timothy chapter two, not worrying about the externalities of gold and apparel and braided hair and so on, but of a godly reverent spirit, spiritual wealth. So verse 16 here in Psalm 49, do not be afraid when one becomes rich, when the glory of his house is increased. For when he dies, he shall carry nothing away.

His glory shall not descend after him, but while he lives, he blesses himself. For men will praise you when you do well for yourself. He shall go to the generation of his fathers.

They shall never see light. Circle that and put Proverbs 13, 9. Proverbs 13, 9. That's our passage. The light of the righteous rejoices, but the lamp of the wicked will be put out.

They shall never see light. A man who is in honor now yet does not understand is like the beasts that perish. Turn over to Psalm 145.

Psalm 145. This is a Psalm of David. I will exalt you, my God and King.

I will bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you and I will praise your name forever and ever. If you don't think David believed in the resurrection, he doesn't say, I will praise your name to the end of my days.

I will praise your name as long as I live. He says, time without end. Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.

His greatness is unsearchable. One generation will commend your works to the next and will proclaim your mighty acts, the glorious splendor of your majesty. And I will meditate on your wondrous works.

They will proclaim the power of your awesome deeds. And I will declare your greatness. They will extol the fame of your abundant goodness and sing joyfully of your righteousness.

The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in loving devotion. The Lord is good to all. His compassion rests on all He has made.

All you have made will give you thanks, O Lord, and your saints will bless you. They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might to make known to men your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and your dominion endures through all generations.

The Lord is faithful in all His words and kind in all His actions. The Lord upholds all who fall and lifts up those who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to you and you give them their food in season.

You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. Do we have any need to worry about the accumulation of wealth? I need to provide. I need to ensure the future.

I need to guarantee that we won't starve, that we won't be hungry, that our seed will be begging bread. The Lord is righteous in all His ways and kind in all His deeds. The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call out to Him in truth.

Our prayers are effective when they reflect this wisdom, the understanding, the truth that is communicated to those who accumulate it, who store it away, who treat it as treasure. Again, Proverbs 2, if you seek it as silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, that's when you find the knowledge of God. That's when you understand the fear of the Lord.

The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call out to Him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear Him. He hears their cry and delivers them, but all the wicked He will destroy.

My mouth will declare the praise of the Lord. Let every creature bless His holy name forever and ever." And if you don't have notes on this psalm already, this is an acrostic each of these verses begins with successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It was designed to be memorized.

It was designed to be remembered. And especially when you get to verses 14 through 20, this is treasure. God will never suffer the righteous to be moved.

I've never seen the righteous go hungry or his seed begging bread. And yet our impulse, our instinct, the counsel of the world is, well, you've got to accumulate. You've got to invest.

You've got to provide. We're going to see a little bit about investment in our second session because it's coming up in the next section here. When you get to verse 11, we have another correction.

We've got a case of swapped letters in a word. And one of my favorite words is in here, but it's there because of swapped letters. And we'll fix that in the second section.

But what is our conclusion here? We understand academically, we assent and acknowledge, well, of course, treasure in heaven is much better than treasure on earth. But how do we turn the corner into application? Well, how busy do we get managing, washing, sweeping, accumulating our possessions? It has its place, but does it get in the way of, does it edge out in our priorities and goals and values, ensuring that we redeem the time because the days by default are evil and redeeming the time is ensuring that we pack a little bit of divine treasure away in heaven, in our souls. And whatever we have, whatever we are stewards of, it is a responsibility.

It is a stewardship, and it is required in a steward that a man be found faithful. What we have, we should care for, care for it well, be organized, be orderly, be clean and keep our stuff clean, be functional and keep our stuff functional. It has an important place in our lives.

It just can't become more important than our spiritual priorities. That's why they are priorities. What comes prior? What comes first? This is why prayer life as emphasized in first Timothy is so important.

Evening and morning and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud and he will hear my voice. This reorients us. It grounds us.

Interesting that we ground ourselves and this gets our spiritual perspective back in place. If we go to the Lord in prayer at the start of the day, stop in the middle of the day and just have a prayer session, schedule it in, make it happen at the end of the day, review the day, take it to the Lord in prayer, acknowledge our failures, ask for wisdom and strength and the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit to stop me in the midst of committing the sins that I am so apt to commit. Lord, stop me, bring it to my mind.

That's what the Holy Spirit is here for, is to convict. I don't want to be convicted later. I want to be convicted just before I commit this sin of the tongue, just before I commit this attitude sin.

When it starts fomenting, this is a matter of prayer. Will God answer this prayer if I ask Him to convict me and shout in my ear that I am doing wrong and I'm departing from my spiritual priorities? Will He answer that prayer in the affirmative? Yes, He will. But He's not going to answer it if I don't pray it and if I don't respond when He does answer it and I run roughshod over the Holy Spirit's ministry in my heart.

But I reaffirm my priorities when I pray evening, morning and at noon. How many times did Daniel pray? Three times a day. And everybody knew it because it was a visible change in his duties.

He stopped what he was doing. He went to the window that faced Jerusalem and he prayed. Everybody knew he was a man of prayer and they knew that his accomplishments and his wisdom and the rightful authority that he wielded in the kingdom was given to him.

And he could tell anybody, you know that praying you see me do? That's why I'm effective. That's why God blesses my efforts. So this is fruitful for application.

This is the fruit of the lips. This will make us wise children. If we heed the instruction of our Heavenly Father and sort our perspective out in terms of spiritual values, spiritual wealth versus earthly accumulation, earthly possessions.

Where are we wealthy? Where are we poor? That's what counts. Let's pause here and take a break. When we come back, we're going to move forward now into verses 9 through 12.